

Remarks by H.E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the Manchester Consular Association's annual Gala Dinner
on 18 November 2022

Lord Mayors, City leaders and councilors, honoured guests,

Firstly, my wife and I are delighted to be here today. I would also like to congratulate Ms Jo Ahmed, Honorary Consul of Japan, on her appointment as President of the Manchester Consular Association.

Since she assumed her post in 2018, Jo has devoted herself to promoting Japan's relations with this region in a wide range of fields, particularly economic and cultural. In addition, she has provided support to about 40 Japanese companies based in northwestern England and approximately 2,000 Japanese residents, so that they can continue living each day without worry.

These great efforts have been highly appreciated, and after the expiration of her term at the end of this year, she is scheduled to be reappointed as Honorary Consul of Japan from January 1st 2023.

I hope that Jo will continue to play an active role in promoting relations between Manchester and Japan, and that she will further strengthen cooperation with the consuls of the other countries participating today.

As you all know, North West England was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and even today, more than 200 years on, this region still has an international reputation for its achievements in commerce and industry. Manchester is the influential metropolitan area of this historically rich region, and is an important regional hub for the UK in terms of politics, the economy and culture.

Furthermore, looking to the future, Manchester has set the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2038, ahead of the national goal, and is making great strides in the creation of new technologies and the efficient use of resources.

In September 2021, a collaboration with the city of Osaka, the second largest city in Japan, focusing on decarbonisation initiatives among other things, was announced.

Mutual exchanges between the two cities have already begun and substantial cooperative efforts involving businesses and academic institutions are about to begin in earnest. Today, with the attendance of Jo and Councillor Craig, Mayor Burnham and I have also reconfirmed the need to further strengthen this cooperation.

Manchester not only attracts attention for its economy, but also in the field of sports, hosting two of the world's leading football clubs, Manchester City and Manchester United. In this regard, let me pay tribute to City's partner, Yokohama F. Marinos, who last season became the champion of Japan's professional football league.

Furthermore, as we are gathered here today at the Manchester Art Gallery, it is even clearer what diverse cultural attractions this city has to offer in the fields of art and music. This year, a Japanese opera singer took part in a performance of Madame Butterfly with Manchester's iconic Hallé Symphony Orchestra last May. Jo kindly arranged for my wife and me to attend the event, which was truly the highlight of the Orchestra's last season.

I also had the pleasure of visiting the John Rylands Research Institute and Library at the University of Manchester this afternoon. The library boasts an impressive number of documents, including Japanese books from the 18th and 19th centuries, and I was struck by the majestic design of the building, which was reminiscent of a church.

Turning to less happy topics, I have a vivid memory of the tragic terrorist bombing that occurred in this wonderful city five years ago. My heart is with the victims of the attack and their bereaved families. Any attempt to change the status quo by force or violence should be strongly condemned, and, taking into serious circumstances of today's world, the principle of the rule of law has to be upheld in both the domestic and international contexts.

Some say that "It always rains in Manchester", but in Japan we have a proverb that, when translated, means "the ground hardens after it rains".

Even if difficult problems arise, we can overcome them and further increase the international appeal of this region. In this spirit, may I express my wish for the continued success of Honorary Consul Ahmed and the other consuls active in this outstanding area.

Thank you indeed for your attention.